

# CDF Uniforms and Patches

The CDF uniform has gone through a multitude of changes. In 1905 and until 1927, under the State Board of Forestry, uniforms were not yet adopted; most Rangers wore their everyday work clothing that consisted of jeans and a long sleeve shirt.

In 1927, when the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry was created, a semi military work uniform was adopted. This uniform consisted of the Ranger Star Badge on the front of a long sleeve khaki shirt, brown belt, green britches with brown knee-high lace boots, and the gray or white flat brim ranger hat. This type of hat was very hot, uncomfortable, and difficult to wear, but was considered the proper status for a Ranger. Most Rangers would not give them up because of the respect they commanded. No uniform allowances were given. Employees were required to provide their own uniforms. In 1938 the first shoulder patch was placed on the uniform. The daughter of State Forester Merritt Pratt designed it. The patch was worn on the right shoulder. In 1939 the uniform britches were changed to tan khaki colored pants or jeans, a belt, and boots that were required to be brown in color. In 1949 the addition of a small silver nametag was added to the uniform.

In 1961, the Department of Natural Resources was abolished and the Department of Conservation was created. The "Division of Forestry" shoulder patch was changed to show "Conservation". Still, only one patch was worn on the right shoulder. Added to the shoulder patch was an over the shoulder rocker that identified the ranger unit where the employee was assigned. In 1964 the uniform pants changed to green pants or green Levis. The dress uniform was a wool Eisenhower style coat green in color with Webcord pants. The tie was green in color and the dress nametag was silver. Field nametags were made of green plastic. At this time, all leather was required to be brown in color and shirts were to be long sleeved and khaki.

In 1970 significant changes began to take place in uniforms and badges. The leather requirement was changed from brown to black, and seven titled badges were established and issued to all employees except the firefighter seasonal classification.

In 1976 State Forest Ranger I Herb Nemeyer of the Beaumont District, Riverside County submitted a request to wear a United States 1876 Bennington Flag patch. The 2"x 4" flag patch was approved for one year and was worn over the right shirt pocket.

In 1977 uniform shirts were changed to a flying cross style and Workrite was the approved pant. Another significant change occurred in 1977 when the Division of Forestry separated from the Department of Conservation and became the Department of Forestry. In late 1977 or early 1978 a new patch was created. The tree design stayed the same, however, the words "Department of Forestry" were spelled out around the tree. A second design arrived about eight months later. The tree design was improved and the Department name was reduced to "Dept. of Forestry". Also in 1978, the ranger unit name rockers were discontinued on the over the shoulder patches.

Collar brass was issued to all badged employees during this time. This brought the total number of titled badges to 12. The badge did undergo one minor change: the word "Division" was changed to "Department".



1938



1961



1977

The shield style shoulder patch also arrived around this time, a complete change of the previous round patch. The new patch contained the words “Department of Forestry” over a symbol of both fire and forestry.

In 1981, the words Fire and Forestry were placed over the symbols, and in 1983 a shoulder patch was worn on each shoulder. In 1985 the nametag changed to show the Department seal and the name of the ranger unit where the person was assigned.

The next and last change in our 100 Year History to the shield patch was the name change in 1987 to “Department of Forestry and Fire Protection”.

In 2000, CDF made a major change, going from the green and Khaki uniform colors to navy blue. A UC Davis study showed that the material used in the green pants worn by CDF firefighters could contribute to burn injuries. The polyester in the pants could actually melt into skin if exposed to flame. The study recommended a change in pants. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard for fire fighting pants was 100% cotton. There were no manufacturers making 100% cotton green pants and none interested in making them just for CDF. What was available was navy blue, worn by many fire departments throughout the country. While the safety issue affected only the response uniform pants, the rest of the uniform had to go blue also.

The daily response uniform consists of navy blue pants and a navy blue shirt with a 100% cotton t-shirt underneath. There is also an administrative uniform. It is a semi-formal work/response uniform for attending training classes or public events. Personnel can wear their work pants or purchase optional pants that are not 100% cotton and are a little dressier. These pants are worn with a more professional long-sleeve white shirt and a tie. The dress uniform includes the dress pant, long sleeve shirt, jacket and hat and is for formal occasions such as funerals and ceremonies. One other change occurred recently, the last remnant of the original badge faded into history; the Chief Officer badge transitioned from the traditional star badge to a gold shield badge.

Though the uniform has changed many times throughout the years, one thing remains the same: CDFers do a great job, no matter what they are wearing!

*(Most excerpts and photos provided by Steve Huntington.)*



1978



1981



1987



**L to R: Retired Heavy Fire Equipment Operator Nip Rasmussen, Fire Apparatus Engineer Kris Timberlake, and Retired Fire Prevention Specialist Harry Martin showing off different versions of the CDF uniform. Photo by Robert Foley. (Summer 2000 Communique')**



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